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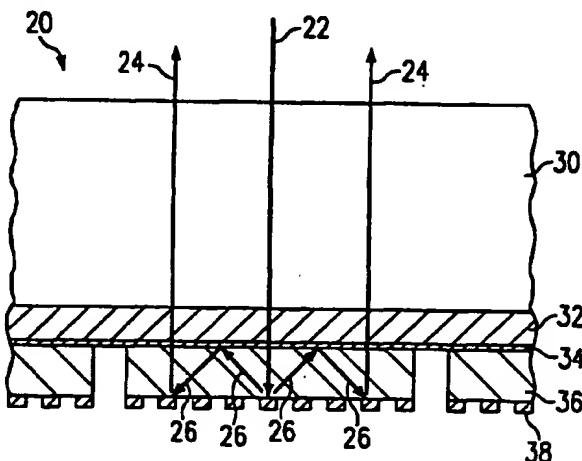
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(54) Multi-band infrared photodetector

(57) An infrared detector array includes a plurality of detector pixel structures, each having a plurality of coplanar sections responsive to different bands of infrared radiations. Each section of a pixel structure comprises a plurality of elongate quantum well infrared radiation absorbing photoconductor (QWIP) elements. The group of QWIP elements are spaced such that they comprise a diffraction grating for the received infrared radiation. Top and bottom longitudinal contacts are provided on opposite surfaces of the QWIP elongate elements to provide current flow transverse to the axis of

the element to provide the required bias voltage. An infrared radiation reflector is provided to form an optical cavity for receiving infrared radiation. A plurality of detector pixel structures are combined to form a focal plane array. Each pixel structure section produces a signal that is transmitted through a conductive bump to a terminal of a read out integrated circuit. The group of signals from the detector pixel structures produces a multi-band (color) image corresponding to the received infrared radiation.

FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)



Description**TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

- 5 [0001] The present invention pertains in general to infrared detectors and in particular to such detectors which are responsive to multiple bands of infrared radiation.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- 10 [0002] Infrared detectors are used for collecting image information under conditions which do not allow generally conventional optical observation, such as at night or through clouds, haze or dust. The information gathered within infrared imaging can be enhanced if multiple bands of infrared radiation can be collected concurrently. This is much like color in an optical image. Infrared radiation in different bands can be indicative of different elements in a scene, such as different materials, reflectivity, temperatures and so forth. Therefore, for optimum viewing through use of infrared radiation, it is desired to have a sensor capable of concurrently detecting multiple bands of infrared radiation.

- 15 [0003] Multi-band infrared sensing has been performed with detectors of different types. Semiconductor infrared detectors are becoming among the most widely used, and for observing scenes, a well known type is referred to as a "staring array." One configuration for a multi-band staring array detects each of the different bands of radiation with a planar layer of photosensitive material with the multiple layers in a stack wherein all of the upper layers are transparent to the radiation absorbed by the lower layers.

- 20 [0004] The present invention is directed to a configuration for an infrared detector which has a unique configuration that is particularly adaptable for use with multi-quantum well (MQW) photosensitive detection material.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- 25 [0005] A selected embodiment of the present invention is a multi-band quantum well infrared photodetector which has a pixel structure that includes a plurality of co-planar sections, with each section being responsive to a respective, different band of infrared radiation. Each section of the pixel structure has a plurality of elongate, multiple quantum well infrared radiation absorbing elements. Each of the elements has first and second opposite longitudinal surfaces. The elements in each section have a physical configuration which includes a periodic spacing dimension for the elements and a width dimension for the elements. Each of the sections has a respective, different configuration. The multiple quantum well elements comprise a diffraction grating for the infrared radiation. A first contact includes a plurality of planar, electrically interconnected strips respectively in contact with and extending along the first surfaces of the multiple quantum well elements. A plurality of second contacts are respectively located in each of the sections with the second contact in each section electrically connected to the second surfaces of the multiple quantum well elements in the corresponding one of the sections. The first and second contacts are positioned on opposite longitudinal sides of each of said multiple quantum well elements to provide current flow through said elements in a direction substantially transverse to the axis of the elements. A planar reflector is provided for the infrared radiation. The reflector is positioned on an opposite side of the second contacts from the multiple quantum well elements.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- 40 [0006] For a more complete understanding of the present invention and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

45 Figure 1 is a section, elevation view of a prior art QWIP having a metal surface relief diffraction grating and GaAs substrate;

Figure 2 is a prior art QWIP having a metal surface relief diffraction grating;

50 Figures 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D are section, elevation views illustrating a sequence of fabrication steps for producing a structure for the present invention;

Figures 4A, 4B and 4C are section, elevation views showing multiple embodiments of enhanced QWIPs (EQWIP) each consisting of a group of multiple quantum well elements forming a diffraction grating for infrared radiation;

55 Figure 5 is a perspective, partially sectioned, view of a multi-pixel, focal plane array with unpolarized two dimensional grating EQWIP elements hybridized to a silicon readout integrated circuit (ROIC) in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 6 is a perspective, partially sectioned view of a further embodiment of the present invention, similar to that shown in Figure 5, but having polarized one-dimension grating EQWIP elements;

Figure 7 is a planar view of a further pixel structure configuration in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 8 is a planar view of a still further pixel structure configuration (elongate) in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 9 is a still further pixel structure configuration in accordance with the patent invention.

Figure 10 is a planar view of a focal plane array utilizing a large number of detector pixel structures in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 11 is a block and schematic illustration of an electrical circuit for each EQWIP pixel structure in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0007] The present invention is directed to a photodetector in which a single pixel has a structure that is responsive to multiple bands of infrared radiation. This pixel structure utilizes photodetector material and a preferred type of such material is termed multiple quantum well (MQW). A structure which utilizes this is often termed a Quantum-Well Infrared Photodetector (QWIP).

[0008] Designs for QWIPs are presented in "Quantum-Well Infrared Photodetectors," J. Appl. Phys. 74 (8), 15 October 1993, by B.F. Levine. Detector structures with metal gratings are shown in Figure 142 of this article. These are shown in Figures 1 and 2 herein.

[0009] Referring to Figure 1, a QWIP 20 receives incident mode infrared radiation as indicated by arrow 22. Reflected zero order diffractive mode radiation is indicated by arrows 24. Trapped higher order diffractive mode radiation is indicated by arrows 26. The QWIP 20 includes a GaAs substrate 30 which is joined to an AlAs reflector 32. An n^+ GaAs contact 34 is joined to the reflector 32 and to an MQW region 36 comprising a group of layers. A metal diffractive grating 38 is joined to the MQW region. Because of quantum mechanical selection rules an MQW only absorbs radiation through modes in which a component of the electric field is perpendicular to the MQW layers in the MQW region 36. The purpose of the grating 38 is to increase the absorption of radiation by diffracting that radiation, as indicated by arrow 22, by the grating 38 to produce trapped diffracting radiation modes shown by the arrows 26 with electric field component perpendicular to the MQW region. The arrows 26 represent trapped radiation. Only the radiation reflected normal to the surface of the QWIP 20, as shown by arrows 24, is lost by the QWIP 20. Thus, the addition of the metal grating 38 increases the absorption of infrared radiation by the QWIP 20.

[0010] A further prior art QWIP configuration is shown in Figure 2. A QWIP 40, similar to that shown in Figure 1, has incident mode radiation indicated by arrow 22, reflected zero order diffractive mode radiation indicated by arrows 24 and trapped higher order diffractive mode radiation indicated by arrows 26. The QWIP 40 includes a thin GaAs substrate 42, an n^+ contact 44, MQW region 46 and a metal grating 48.

[0011] For LWIR applications, QWIPs 36 and 46 shown in Figures 1 and 2 each comprise approximately a 50 period $\text{GaAs}/\text{Al}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{As}$ MQW with 40-50 Å GaAs wells doped n-type with a doping density of $N_D \approx (0.7-1.5) \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, and 300-500 Å undoped $\text{Al}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{As}$ barrier. The Aluminum to Gallium alloy ratio, x , is typically 0.26-0.29 for LWIR application. The MQW region 36 and 46 includes an MQW sandwiched between two highly doped n-type ($N_D \approx 2 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$) n^+ GaAs contact layers with typical thicknesses of 0.5-1 μm . The QWIP structure is epitaxially grown on a lattice matched GaAs substrate.

[0012] A sequence of processing steps for fabricating a detector in accordance with the present invention is shown in Figures 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D. Referring to Figure 3A, a detector 60, in accordance with the present invention, is fabricated on a GaAs substrate 62 with a thickness of approximately 635 μm . An $\text{Al}_{0.5}\text{Ga}_{0.5}\text{As}$ etch stop layer 64 is formed on the surface of the substrate 62. The layer 64 has a preferable thickness of 1,000 Å.

[0013] A conductive n^+ GaAs contact 66 is formed on the etch stop layer 64. The contact 66 has a preferable thickness of 0.5 μm . A multiple quantum well (MQW) structure 68 is formed over the contact 66. Structure 68 comprises a plurality of material layers which make up the MQW. The detailed characteristics of structure 68 are shown in Table I below. An n^+ GaAs contact 70 is formed on the upper surface of the structure 68. Contact 70 has a preferred thickness of 0.4 μm .

[0014] The doping for contacts 66 and 70 is shown in Table I.

[0015] Referring to Figure 3B, openings 76 and 78 are formed by etching through the contact 70 and MQW structure 68.

[0016] Referring to Figure 3B, the detector 60 has an etched, planar Au/Ge ohmic contact 74 formed on the surface of the contact 70. An Au contact/reflector 72, which is a reflector for infrared radiation, is formed on the surface of contact 70 and contact 74.

[0017] Referring to Figure 3C, an In (indium) bump 80 is bonded to the reflector 72 and to a contact terminal (not shown) of a silicon readout integrated circuit (ROIC) 81. The bump 80 is formed by a photoresist image reversal process followed by In layer deposition and liftoff. A wicked epoxy 83 provides a physical bond between the ROIC 81, the bump 80 and the remaining exposed structure of the detector 60.

[0018] A representative direct injection ROIC structure for use with the present invention is described in "The Infra-

red & Electro-Optical Systems Handbook," Volume 3, Electro-Optical Components, William D. Rogatto, Editor, Chapter 5, "Readout Electronics for Infrared Sensors," John L. Vampola, ERIM/SPIE, 1993 (see section 5.6.6).

[0019] Further processing of the detector 60 is shown in Figure 3C. The structure shown in Figure 3C is inverted from that shown in Figure 3B. The bulk of the substrate 62 is removed by lapping and the remainder is removed by etching down to the etch stop layer 64. The layer 64 itself is then removed. Contact 66 is thinned from 0.5 μm to 0.4 μm .

[0020] Referring to Figure 3D, a conventional resist mask is applied to the surface of the layer 66 and an etch operation is performed. The etch extends through the layer 66, the MQW structure 68 down to the contact 70. This produces elongate structures 82, 84, 86, 88, 90 and 92. Elongate structure 84 comprises a contact 66A over an elongate MQW element 68A. In a similar fashion, elongate structure 86 comprises a contact 66B which is in physical and electrical contact with an elongate MQW element 68B, structure 88 comprises a contact 66C over an MQW element 68C and structure 90 comprises a contact 66D over an MQW element 68D. The elements 84, 86, 88 and 90 are spaced in such a manner as to form a diffraction grating for the infrared radiation to be received by the detector 60. The MQW elements 68A-D are each infrared radiation absorbers.

[0021] The etching process shown in Figure 3D also produces structures 82 and 92. The structure 82 comprises an n⁺GaAs conductor 66E above a region of the epoxy 83. The structure 92 comprises an n⁺GaAs conductor 66F which is supported by a region of the epoxy 83.

[0022] The structures 84, 86, 88 and 90 each comprise a quadrant of one pixel in accordance with the present invention. Variable parameters in this configuration include the center-to-center spacing between the photodetector structures as well as the width of each individual one of the structures. A different configuration is produced by varying one or both of these parameters. Changes in the configuration change the band of infrared radiation which is absorbed by the structure. In the present invention, one pixel comprises four sections, each having a different configuration of dimensions. These dimensions are selected such that the pixel is responsive to the desired bands of infrared radiation.

[0023] The Figures are not necessarily drawn to scale, but are illustrated for best understanding.

[0024] Referring to Figure 4A, there is shown a dimensioned layout for a detector 100 in accordance with the present invention. This represents one section of a pixel structure within an array of such pixel structures. The detector 100 includes elements 102, 104, 106, 108 and 110 which are formed in the same manner as the elements 84, 86, 88 and 90 shown in Figure 3D. Each of the elements includes a top elongate n⁺GaAs contact, such as 102A, an elongate MQW element 102B and a flat planar n⁺GaAs contact 112 which is connected to the bottom surface of MQW elements for each of the elements 102-110. A metal contact/reflector 114 made of Au and having a thickness of 2,000Å is formed on the opposite side of the contact 112 from the MQW elements such as 102B.

[0025] An ohmic contact 113 is a rectangular, planar structure comprising Au/Ge and having a thickness of approximately 900Å and dimensions of 5 μm by 10 μm . The ohmic contact 113 is fabricated on the surface of contact 112 before the formation of reflector 114. The ohmic contact 113 provides a good ohmic connection between the contact 112 and the reflector 114.

[0026] A further embodiment of a detector 120 in accordance with the present invention is shown in Figure 4B. This is essentially the same as the detector 100 shown in Figure 4A, but the etching operation which formed the elements 102-110, is continued until the etching extends through a portion of the lower contact 112, but not the entire thickness of the contact 112. This etching operation produces elements 122, 124, 126, 128 and 130. The width and spacing of these elements is the same as the width and spacing of the elements 102-110 shown in Figure 4A. The element 122, as an example for all of the elements in detector 120, includes an elongate n⁺GaAs contact 122A which is in physical and electrical contact with the upper surface of the elongate MQW element 122B and a lower elongate n⁺GaAs portion of the contact 112. The patterned contact 112 is positioned on the surface of a metal reflector 132, which is essentially the same as the reflector 114 shown in Figure 4A. A planar ohmic contact 134, corresponding to the ohmic contact 113 shown in Figure 4A, is formed on the n⁺GaAs contact 112 at a position to the lower right of the element 130. The contact/reflector 132 is then formed. The ohmic contact 134 provides a good ohmic connection between the contact 112 and the reflector 132.

[0027] A further embodiment of a detector 120 in accordance with the present invention is shown in Figure 4C. This is the same as the detector 100 shown in Figure 4A but the etching operation which formed the elements 102-110 is continued until the etching extends through the lower contact 112 except for one region. A region 112A is not removed.

This etching produces elements 138, 139, 140, 141 and 142. The width and spacing of these elements is approximately the same as the width and spacing of the elements 102-110 shown in Figure 4A. The sensitivity of a detector to a given wavelength of infrared radiation is related to the width and spacing of the MQW elements. The element 138, as an example of all of the elements, includes an elongate upper n⁺GaAs contact 138A in physical and electrical contact with the upper surface of an elongate MQW element 138B and a lower elongate n⁺GaAs contact 138C is connected to the lower surface of the MQW element 138B. The contact 138C and the corresponding contacts on the other elements, are positioned on the surface of a metal contact/reflector 137, which is essentially the same as the reflector 114 shown in Figure 4A. A planar ohmic contact 143, corresponding to the ohmic contact 113 shown in Figure 4A, is formed on the n⁺GaAs contact 112 at the position of the region 112A. The contact/reflector 137 is then formed. The ohmic contact 143

provides a good ohmic connection between the region 112A, which is connected electrically to all of the other lower contacts, such as 138C, and the reflector 137.

[0028] Figures 4A, 4B and 4C represent section views of the elongate elements 102-110, 122-130 and 138-142.

[0029] Referring now to Figure 5, there is shown a focal plane detector array 150 which includes a pixel structure 153. The array 150 has a plurality of such pixel structures, arranged in an array. A view of the detector array 150 as indicated by the arrows 152 corresponds substantially to the views shown in Figures 3D and 4A. The pixel structure 153 includes detector pixel structure sections 154, 156, 158 and 160. Pixel structure sections 162 and 164 are in adjacent pixel structures. Each pixel structure section 154-164 has a corresponding In bump such as bump 166 for pixel structure section 154, bump 168 for pixel structure section 158, bump 170 for pixel structure section 162 and bump 172 for pixel structure section 164. Each of the bumps is connected to a corresponding terminal (not shown) of a ROIC 180. A wicked epoxy 182 bonds the pixel structure sections 154-164 to the ROIC 180.

[0030] The pixel structure section 158 is described in detail. The remaining pixel structure sections have a similar configuration. The entire top surface of the detector array 150 comprises an upper array n⁺GaAs contact 186 which has been etched to have elongate (strip) segments including 186A and 186B which extend between wider elongate n⁺GaAs conductors 186C and 186D. Elongate segments in pixel structure section 158 include segments 186E, 186F, 186G and 186H. The segments 186E-186H are each connected at a common end to a wide n⁺GaAs conductor 186J and a similar conductor (not shown) at the opposite side of the pixel structure section 158. The contact segments 186A and 186B are transverse to the contact segments 186E, 186F, 186G and 186H. Contact segments 186E-186H correspond to contacts 66A, 66B, 66C and 66D in Figure 3D. The n⁺GaAs conductors 186C and 186D correspond to conductors 66E and 66F in Figure 3D.

[0031] Each of the pixel structure sections 154-164 has a contact/reflector for electrically connecting the lower contact of the pixel to the corresponding In bump.

[0032] The region between the bumps is filled with wicked epoxy 182, such as shown in Figures 3C and 3D.

[0033] In each of the pixel structure sections 154-164 immediately below the n⁺GaAs contact 186 is a diffractive MQW structure 190 which has a segment beneath each of the contact 186 segments. This is essentially the same as shown in Figures 3D and 4A. For example, MQW element 190A is immediately below contact 186A.

[0034] A planar contact is formed in a position between the MQW structure 190 and a contact/reflector. The pixel structure sections 154, 156, 158, 160, 162 and 164 have respective lower (second) contacts 194A, 194B, 194C, 194D, 194E and 194F.

[0035] A contact/reflector 196A is in a lower portion of pixel structure section 154. Reflector 196A is physically and electrically in contact with bump 166. A contact/reflector 196B is in the lower portion of pixel structure section 158 and is in electrical contact with the bump 168. A contact/reflector 196C is in the lower portion of pixel structure section 162 and a contact/reflector 196D is in the lower portion of pixel structure section 164. The contacts/reflectors are made preferably of Au and have a preferred thickness of 2,000Å. Reflectors 196A-196D correspond to reflector 72 in Figure 3D.

[0036] Slots 210, 212, 214, 216 and 218 are etched into the structure of detector array 150 to electrically isolate each pixel structure section. Each of these slots extends upward from the region occupied by the bumps up to the lower surface of the contact 186. These slots are filled with the epoxy 182, which is electrically nonconductive.

[0037] The dimensions and corresponding infrared radiation wavelength bands for each section of the pixel structure 153 is listed as follows:

Section	Spacing (micron)	Width (micron)	Band Center Wavelength (micron)
154	6.4	1.4	8.6
156	7.1	1.5	9.5
158	7.7	1.7	10.4
160	8.4	1.8	11.3

[0038] The infrared radiation bandwidths of sections 154, 156, 158 and 160 increase from approximately 1.0 microns for section 154 to 1.2 microns for section 160.

[0039] Each of the pixel structure sections 154, 156, 158, 160, 162 and 164 has at the base of one region thereof a rectangular, planar ohmic contact, such as ohmic contact 219 shown for pixel structure section 164. A region is the portion of a pixel section substantially surrounded by MQW elements. The ohmic contact can extend to have an area greater than that of one region. The ohmic contact 219 is made of Au/Ge and is positioned between the lower n⁺GaAs

contact 194F and the Au reflector 196D. The ohmic contact 219 provides an ohmic connection between the n⁺GaAs contact 194F and the reflector 196D. A similar ohmic contact is provided at a similar location in each of the other pixel structure sections. Each of the contacts/reflectors provides an electrical connection to the corresponding bump beneath the detector pixel structure section. Each contact/reflector also functions as an infrared radiation reflector.

[0040] The detector array 150 is fabricated by use of the materials and steps described in reference to Figures 3A-3D. Parameters for the detector array 150, as shown in Figure 5, are set out in Table I below. The test results shown in Table II is for a detector in which the pixel size is 56 μm x 56 μm and a typical pixel spacing in the array is 60 μm x 60 μm .

[0041] The top contact 186 is connected to through-conductors on the periphery outside the pixel structures. These through-conductors extend down to In bumps, as described above, to terminals of the underlying ROIC.

[0042] Optimum parameters for section 158 of pixel structure 153 as shown in Figure 5 are set out in Table I below.

Table I

PARAMETER	UNITS	OPTIMAL VALUE
PEAK SPECTRAL RESPONSE	μm	9.0
SPECTRAL FULL WIDTH AT HALF MAX	μm	~1.2
GaAs WELL PARAMETERS		
THICKNESS	A	45
DOPING (n-TYPE)	cm^{-3}	1×10^{18}
NUMBER OF WELLS		18
$\text{Al}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{As}$ BARRIER PARAMETERS		
x-VALUE		~0.27
THICKNESS	A	500
NUMBER OF BARRIERS		19
STRUCTURAL PARAMETERS		
TOP (PATTERNED) CONTACT THICKNESS (n-doping $N_D = 2 \times 10^{18} \text{cm}^{-3}$)	μm	0.4
MQW THICKNESS	μm	1.03
BOTTOM (UNPATTERNED) CONTACT THICKNESS (n-doping $N_D = 2 \times 10^{18} \text{cm}^{-3}$)	μm	0.4
2-D MQW GRATING PERIOD	μm	8
MQW GRATING STRIP WIDTH	μm	1.2

[0043] Test results for a section of a pixel structure fabricated with a strip periodicity of 8.00 microns and a strip width of 1.2 microns is shown in Table II below.

Table II

PARAMETER	TEMP (K)	BIAS (V)	ARRAY AVERAGE (58 SAMPLES)	STANDARD DEVIATION (%)
PEAK SPECTRAL RESPONSE (μm)	77.3	0.5	8.4	
SPECTRAL FWHM (μm)			1.0	
$D^*(500\text{K})$ ($\text{cm}^2\text{Hz}^{1/2}/\text{W}$) $\text{FOV}=23^\circ$	77.3	0.5	3.95×10^9	4.7
		1.5	4.67×10^9	4.1
	83	0.5	2.07×10^9	3.1
		1.5	2.32×10^9	4.5

Table II (continued)

PARAMETER	TEMP (K)	BIAS (V)	ARRAY AVERAGE (58 SAMPLES)	STANDARD DEVIATION (%)
DARK CURRENT DENSITY (A/cm ²)	77.3	0.5	5.5×10^{-5}	3.4
		1.5	1.6×10^{-4}	3.8
	83	0.5	1.6×10^{-4}	4.4
		1.5	5.9×10^{-4}	3.6

[0044] The detector array 150 shown in Figure 5 is non-polarized because the MQW diffractive grating elements are transverse to each other within each pixel structure. Therefore, all polarizations of incident infrared radiation are received.

[0045] Referring to Figure 6, there is shown a polarized detector array 240 which is similar to the detector array 150 shown in Figure 5, but has elongate diffractive MQW elements extending in only one direction. The detector array 240 includes detector pixel structure 241 which includes pixel structure sections 242, 244, 246 and 248. Pixel structure sections 250 and 252 are in adjacent pixel structures. Each pixel structure section has a corresponding In bump for connection to an ROIC 260. Bump 262 connects pixel structure section 242 to a terminal (not shown) of ROIC 260. In a similar fashion, there is provided a bump 264 for pixel structure section 246, a bump 266 for pixel structure section 250 and a bump 268 for pixel structure section 252. There is a corresponding bump for each of the pixel sections within the detector array 240. Each pixel structure section therefore generates a different signal which is provided to the ROIC 260. In this embodiment of the invention, there are four pixel structure sections for each pixel structure.

[0046] The space between the bumps 262-268 is filled with wicked epoxy 270 for bonding the surrounding elements together.

[0047] The detector array 240 has a layer comprising an n⁺GaAs array contact 274 on the upper surface thereof which comprises a plurality of elongate contact strips, all of which are electrically and physically interconnected to each other. The pixel structure section 246 has elongate contacts 274A and 274B.

[0048] Below the contact 274, there is a diffractive MQW structure 276 similar to the structure 190 shown in Figure 5 and the structure 68 shown in Figure 3D. The pixel structure section 246 includes MQW elements 276A and 276B, which have the n⁺GaAs strip contacts 274A and 274B on the upper surfaces thereof. The contact strips 274A and 274B extend between wider n⁺GaAs conductors 274C and 274D.

[0049] A lower (second) planar n⁺GaAs contact for each pixel structure section extends across the detector array 240 but is divided into separate contacts for each of the pixel structure sections. This consists of contact 280A for section 242, contact 280B for section 244, contact 280C for section 246, contact 280D for section 248, contact 280E for section 250 and contact 280F for section 252. Contact 280 corresponds to the contact 70 shown in Figures 3A-3D. The contacts 280A-F are separated by slots 282, 284, 286, 288 and 290.

[0050] An Au contact/reflector is also divided by the slots 282-290 in individual contact/reflectors corresponding to each pixel structure section. Pixel structure section 242 has reflector 298A, section 246 has reflector 298B, section 250 has reflector 298C and pixel section 252 has reflector 298D. As described for detector array 150 in Figure 5, each of the reflectors provides an electrical connection to the corresponding bump beneath the pixel section. Each reflector also functions as an infrared radiation reflector.

[0051] Each of the pixel structure sections 242, 244, 246, 248, 250 and 252 has five longitudinal sections and one longitudinal section thereof is provided with an ohmic contact, such as ohmic contact 292 shown for pixel structure section 250 and contact 294 shown for pixel structure section 252. Each ohmic contact is a rectangular structure comprising Au/Ge having a thickness of 900 Å. Each ohmic contact is formed between the corresponding lower contact, such as contact 280E for pixel structure section 250 and the underlying reflector 298C. The ohmic contact provides a good ohmic connection between the overlying second n⁺GaAs contact and the underlying Au reflector.

[0052] The physical characteristics and infrared radiation bands of response of sections 242, 244, 246 and 248 correspond respectively to sections 154, 156, 158 and 160 shown in Figure 5.

[0053] The detector array 240 shown in Figure 6 has elongate MQW elements running in only one direction. It is therefore sensitive to only one polarity of infrared radiation.

[0054] The pixel structures shown in Figures 5 and 6 each have four different wavelength sections set in a quadrature arrangement. However, the present invention can be implemented in a wide variety of configurations.

[0055] Figures 7, 8 and 9 illustrate other possible pixel structures which show applications of the present invention with different physical dimensions, different numbers of sections and different shapes.

[0056] Figure 7 is a further configuration of a pixel structure 302 in accordance with the present invention. The pixel structure 302 has four sections 302A, 302B, 302C and 302D. Sections 302A and 302B have six-by-six elements and

Sections 302C and 302D have five-by-five elements. The spacing of sections 302A and 302B is 7.0 microns and the spacing of the elements in sections 302C and 302D is 9.0 microns. The thickness of the elements in section 302A is 1-2 microns. The thickness of the elements in sections 302B and 302C is 1.4 microns, and the thickness of the elements in section 302D is 1.8 microns. The pixel structure 302 is fabricated and implemented in the same manner as the pixel structure 153 described in reference to Figure 5.

[0057] Figure 8 is a further configuration of a pixel structure 304 in accordance with the present invention. The structure 304 has four sections 304A, 304B, 304C and 304D which correspond respectively to the sections 302A, 302B, 302C and 302D described in reference to Figure 7. The pixel structure 304 has an elongate configuration as opposed to the square configuration shown for pixel structure 302 in Figure 7. The pixel structure 304 can be fabricated and implemented in the same manner as the pixel structure 153 described in reference to Figure 5.

[0058] A still further pixel structure 306 in accordance with the present invention is illustrated in Figure 9. The pixel structure 306 has sections 306A, 306B, 306C and 306D. However, the sections 306A and 306D are identical in physical configuration and the sections 306B and 306C are identical in physical configuration. Therefore, the pixel structure 306 is responsive to only two bands of infrared radiation. This is in contrast to the four bands of infrared radiation received by the pixel structures shown in Figures 5-8. The sections 306A and 306D correspond to the section 304A of pixel structure 304 shown in Figure 8. The sections 306B and 306C correspond to the pixel structure section 304B shown in Figure 8. The pixel structure 306 can be fabricated and implemented in the same manner as the pixel structure 153 described in reference to Figure 5.

[0059] Referring to Figure 10, there is shown a focal plane array 310 which comprises a plurality of pixel structures, as previously described in accordance with the present invention. This array preferably has 640 pixel structures horizontally and 480 pixel structures vertically. One pixel structure 312, as an example, corresponds to pixel structure 153 described in reference to Figure 5. Each of the pixel structure sections within the array 310 has a separate electrical output signal so that a complete image having 640 x 480 elements can be produced. Each section of the pixel structure provides information related to a different wavelength (color) of infrared radiation.

[0060] The electrical connection of pixel structure sections to an ROIC for the present invention is illustrated in Figure 11. Reference is made to the detector array 150 described in Figure 5. A top n⁺GaAs contact, such as contact 186, is connected to an electrically common point which is shown by a ground symbol. A particular diffractive MQW element 320 which corresponds, for example, to the diffractive MQW element 190A, is connected between the top contact 186 and the lower contact, which corresponds to n⁺GaAs contact 194C. The lower contact is ohmically connected to the Au reflector 196B and connected through the bump 168 to the ROIC 180. For a preferred embodiment this is a "direct injection" ROIC.

[0061] The signal transmitted through the bump 168 is provided to a MOSFET PREAMP transistor 322 which has a gate terminal connected to a V_{bias} supply. Transistor 322 functions as a preamplifier. The amplified signal produced by transistor 322 is integrated by a capacitor 324. The integrated signal is provided to a multiplexer (not shown) which selectively samples the signal produced by each of the pixel structure sections throughout the array. The MQW element 320 is provided with the noted bias voltage through the transistor 322 and intervening conductors to the MQW element 320.

[0062] When infrared radiation is absorbed by the diffractive MQW element 320, carriers are produced which change the conductivity of the MQW element. This changes the output signal from the element. This change in signal corresponds to the received infrared radiation. The collection of all of the signals from the pixel elements produces an image representative of the received infrared radiation.

[0063] Although each of the MQW elements described above has a linear configuration, such elements may also have a curved and elongate configuration.

[0064] In summary, the present invention comprises an improved structure that provides enhanced performance for receiving multiple bands of infrared radiation. The co-planar configuration of adjacent pixel sections for one pixel uses common MQW material but have different physical configurations for reception of different bands of infrared radiation.

[0065] The present invention has been described using a Gallium Arsenide/Aluminum Gallium Arsenide MQW operating in the long wave infrared spectral band of 8-12 μm . However, through the proper selection of parameters and of MQW material systems, the invention is applicable to others spectral bands. Alternate MQW material systems include but are not limited to Indium Gallium Arsenide/Indium Aluminum Arsenide, Indium Gallium Arsenide/Indium Phosphide and strained Indium Gallium Arsenide/Gallium Arsenide.

[0066] Although several embodiments of the invention have been illustrated in the accompanying drawings and described in the foregoing Detailed Description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiments disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions without departing from the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure, comprising:

5 a plurality of coplanar sections, each section responsive to a band of infrared radiation, said sections collectively responsive to a plurality of said bands of infrared radiation,
 each said section having a plurality of elongate, multiple quantum well infrared radiation absorbing elements,
 each of said elements having first and second opposite longitudinal surfaces,
 10 said elements in each said section having a configuration which includes a periodic spacing dimension for said elements and a width dimension for said elements, said sections having respective, different configurations,
 said multiple quantum well elements comprising a diffraction grating for said infrared radiation,
 a first contact which includes a plurality of planar, electrically interconnected strips respectively in contact with
 and extending along said first surfaces of said multiple quantum well elements,
 15 a plurality of second contacts respectively located in each of said sections, each said second contact electrically connected to said second surfaces of said multiple quantum well elements in the corresponding one of said sections,
 said first contact and said second contacts positioned on opposite longitudinal sides of each of said multiple quantum well elements to provide current flow through said elements in a direction substantially transverse to the axis of said elements, and
 20 a planar reflector for said infrared radiation, said reflector positioned on an opposite side of said second contacts from said multiple quantum well elements.

2. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 1 wherein each of said pixel structures comprises four of said sections, each said section responsive to a respective, different band
 25 of said infrared radiation.

3. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 2 wherein said sections are arranged in a quadrature configuration having each section adjoining two other of said sections.

30 4. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 1 wherein said sections are arranged in a liner configuration.

5. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 1 wherein each of said pixel structures has two sets of said sections, wherein the sections in each said set are responsive to the same
 35 band of said infrared radiation.

6. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 1 wherein a first set of said elongate quantum well elements are positioned in quadrature with a second set of said quantum well elements.
 40

7. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 1 wherein said elongate quantum well elements are parallel to each other.

8. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure, comprising:
 45

a plurality of pixel structures forming a planar array which receives said infrared radiation, each said pixel structure responsive to a plurality of bands of said infrared radiation,
 each said pixel structure having a plurality of coplanar sections, each section responsive to a respective, different band of infrared radiation,
 50 each said section having a plurality of elongate, multiple quantum well infrared radiation absorbing elements,
 each of said elements having first and second opposite longitudinal surfaces,
 said elements in each said section having a configuration which includes a periodic spacing dimension for said elements and a width dimension for said elements, said sections having respective, different configurations,
 said multiple quantum well elements comprising a diffraction grating for said infrared radiation,
 55 a first contact which includes a plurality of planar, electrically interconnected strips respectively in contact with and extending along said first surfaces of said multiple quantum well elements,
 a plurality of second contacts respectively located in each of said sections, each said second contact electrically connected to said second surfaces of said multiple quantum well elements in the corresponding one of

said sections,

said first contact and said second contacts positioned on opposite longitudinal sides of each of said multiple quantum well elements to provide current flow through said elements in a direction substantially transverse to the axis of said elements, and

a planar reflector for said infrared radiation, said reflector positioned on an opposite side of said second contacts from said multiple quantum well elements.

9. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 8 wherein each of said pixel structures comprises four of said sections, each said section responsive to a respective, different band of said infrared radiation.

10. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 9 wherein said sections are arranged in a quadrature configuration having each section adjoining two other of said sections.

11. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 8 wherein said sections are arranged in a linear configuration.

12. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 8 wherein each of said pixel structures has two sets of said sections, wherein the sections in each said set are responsive to the same band of said infrared radiation.

13. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 8 wherein a first set of said elongate quantum well elements are positioned in quadrature with a second set of said quantum well elements.

14. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 8 wherein said elongate quantum well elements are parallel to each other.

15. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure, comprising:

said pixel structure having a plurality of photosensitive sections each responsive to a different band of said infrared radiation,

each said section including an infrared radiation absorbing structure,

said photosensitive sections of said pixel structures positioned in a coplanar configuration wherein each of said sections is equally exposed to said infrared radiation,

a first conductive structure electrically connected to each of the infrared radiation absorbing structures in each of said sections of said pixel structure, and

a respective second conductive element for each of said sections, each second conductive element connected in parallel to each of said infrared radiation absorbing structures in the corresponding section.

16. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 15 wherein each of said pixel structures comprises four of said sections, each said section responsive to a respective, different band of said infrared radiation.

17. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 16 wherein said sections are arranged in a quadrature configuration having each section adjoining two other of said sections.

18. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 15 wherein said sections are arranged in a linear configuration.

19. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 15 wherein each of said pixel structures has two sets of said sections, wherein the sections in each said set are responsive to the same band of said infrared radiation.

20. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 15 wherein said infrared radiation absorbing structures are elongate quantum well elements.

21. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 20 wherein a first set of said elongate quantum well elements are positioned in quadrature with a second set of said quantum well elements.

22. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 20 wherein said elongate quantum well elements are parallel to each other.
23. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 20 wherein said quantum well elements in one of said sections have different physical dimensions from the physical dimensions of the quantum well elements in another of said sections.
24. A multi-band quantum well infrared radiation photodetector pixel structure as recited in Claim 20 wherein said physical dimensions are centerline-to-centerline spacing of said elements and the width of said elements.
25. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure, comprising:
- a plurality of pixel structures forming a planar array which receives said infrared radiation, each said pixel structure responsive to a plurality of bands of said infrared radiation,
 - each said pixel structure having a plurality of photosensitive sections each responsive to a different band of said infrared radiation,
 - each said section including an infrared radiation absorbing structure,
 - said photosensitive sections of said pixel structures positioned in a coplanar configuration wherein each of said sections is equally exposed to said infrared radiation,
 - a first conductive structure electrically connected to each of the infrared radiation absorbing structures in each of said sections of said pixel structure, and
 - a respective second conductive element for each of said sections, each second conductive element connected in parallel to each of said infrared radiation absorbing structures in the corresponding section.
26. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 25 wherein each of said pixel structures comprises four of said sections, each said section responsive to a respective, different band of said infrared radiation.
27. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 26 wherein said sections are arranged in a quadrature configuration having each section adjoining two other of said sections.
28. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 25 wherein said sections are arranged in a linear configuration.
29. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 25 wherein each of said pixel structures has two sets of said sections, wherein the sections in each said set are responsive to the same band of said infrared radiation.
30. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 25 wherein said infrared radiation absorbing structures are elongate quantum well elements.
31. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 30 wherein a first set of said elongate quantum well elements are positioned in quadrature with a second set of said quantum well elements.
32. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 30 wherein said elongate quantum well elements are parallel to each other.
33. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 30 wherein said quantum well elements in one of said sections have different physical dimensions from the physical dimensions of the quantum well elements in another of said sections.
34. A multi-band infrared radiation photodetector structure as recited in Claim 33 wherein said physical dimensions are centerline-to-centerline spacing of said elements and the width of said elements.

FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

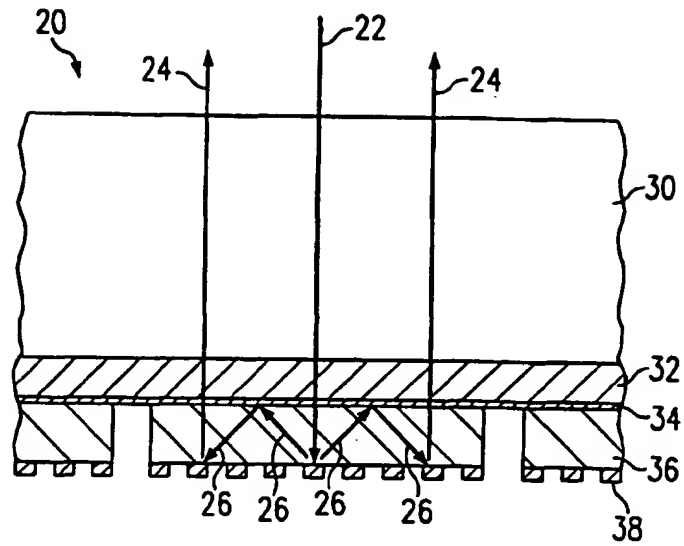


FIG. 2
(PRIOR ART)

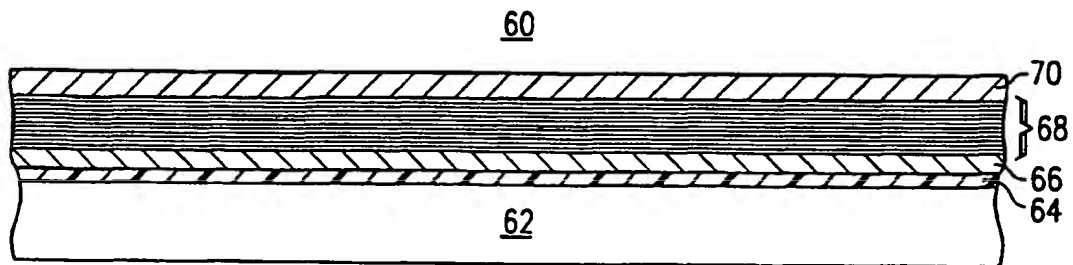
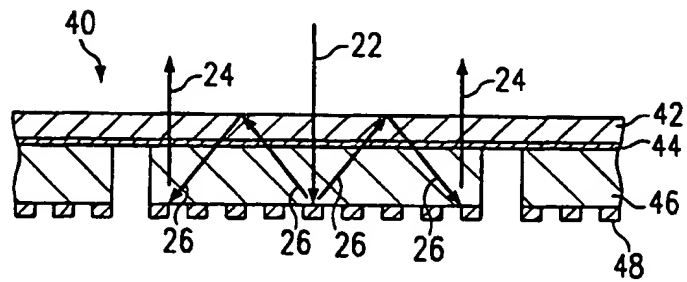


FIG. 3A

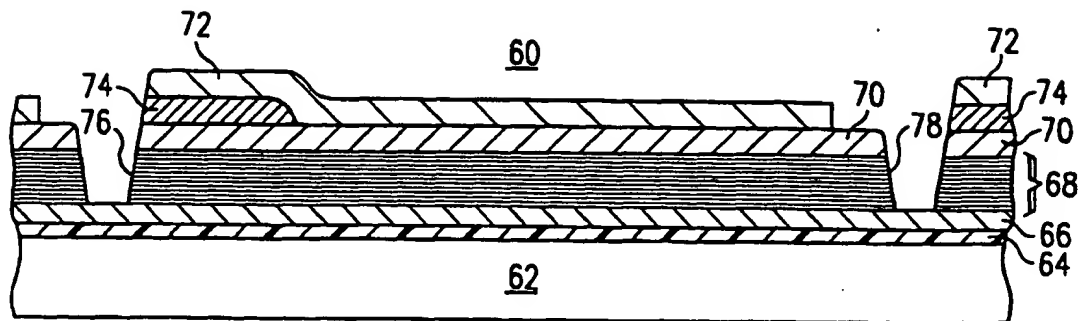


FIG. 3B

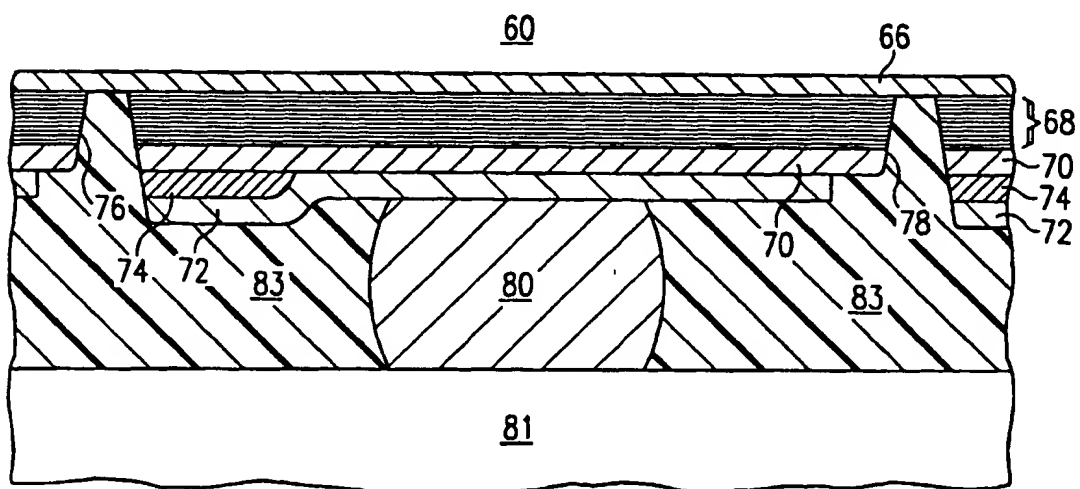


FIG. 3C

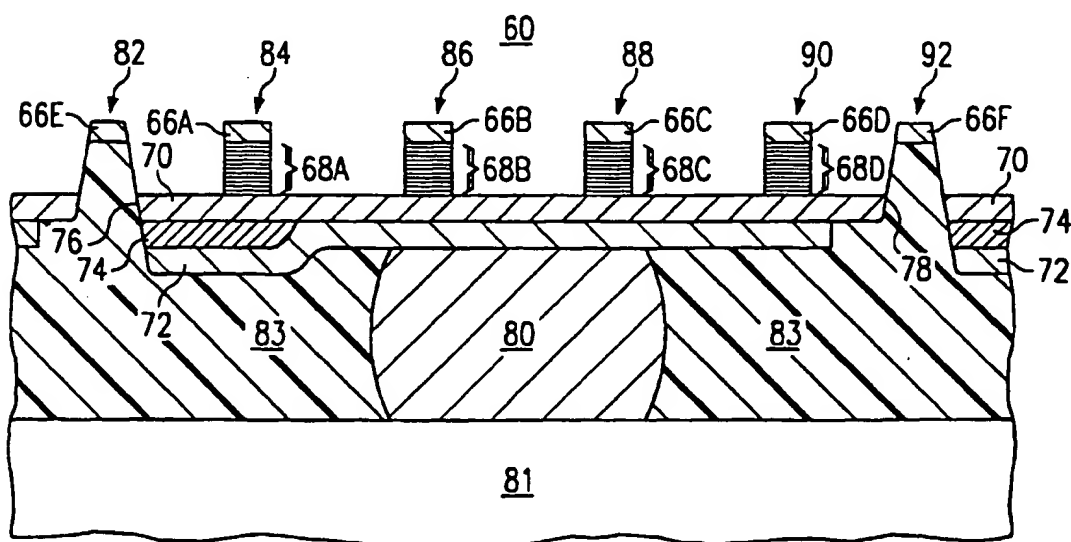
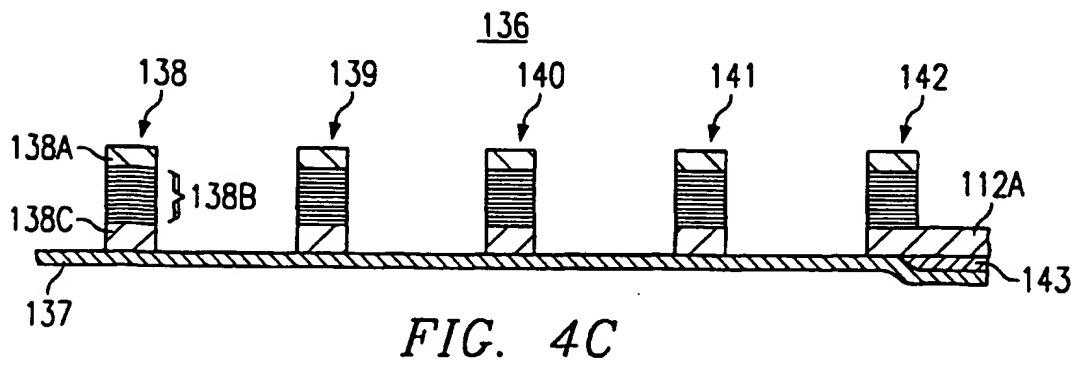
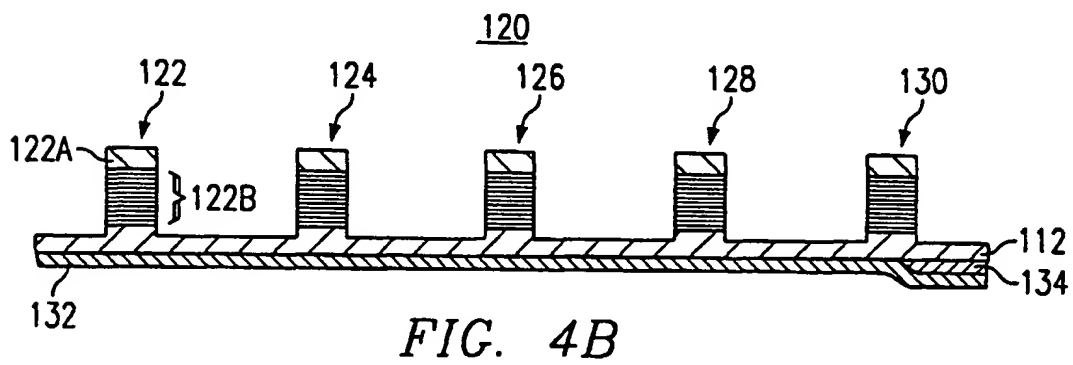
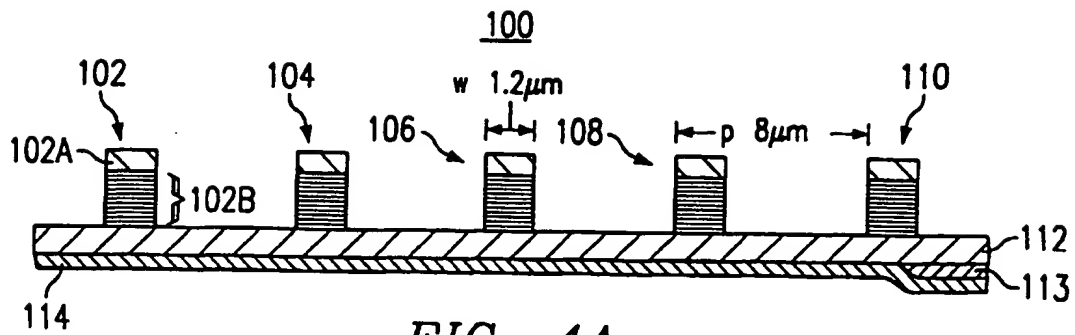
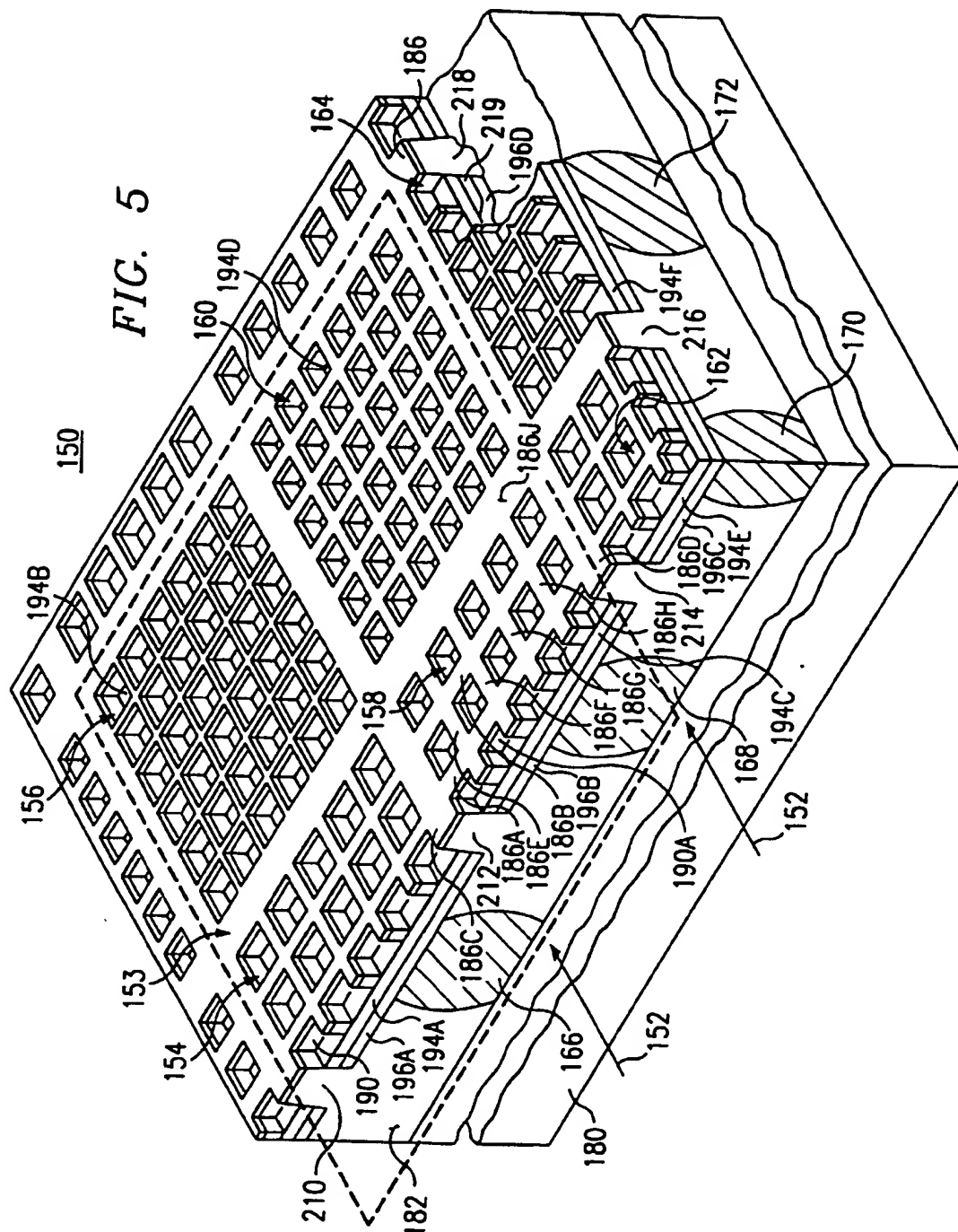
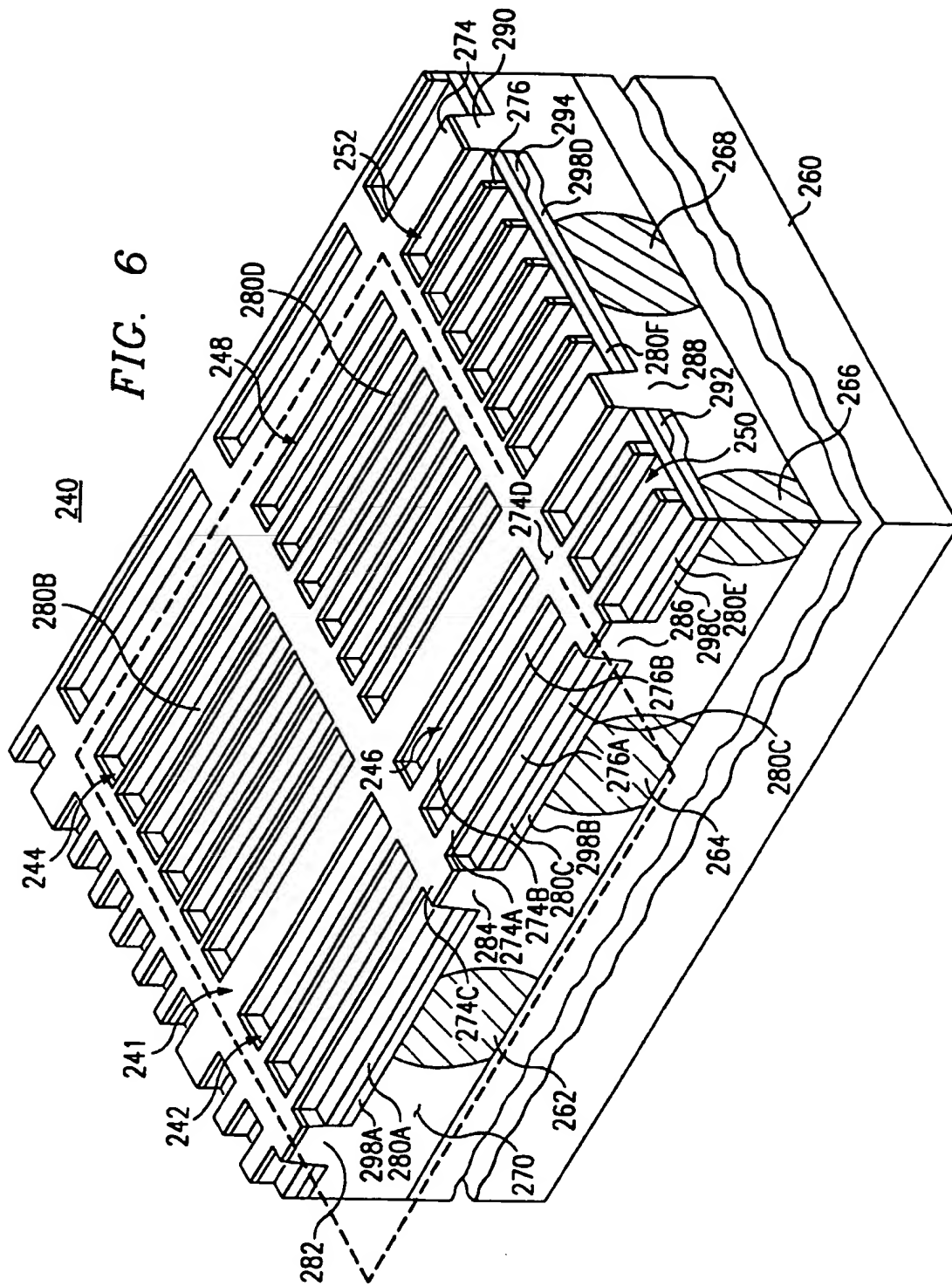
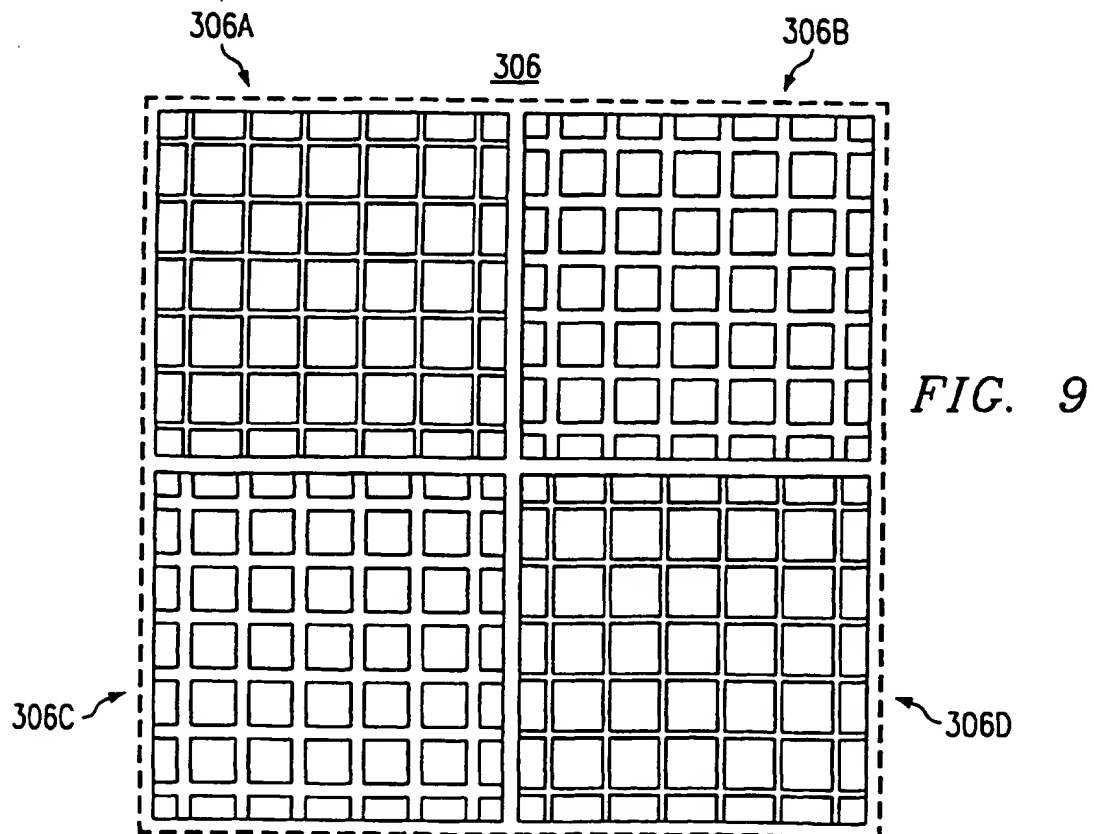
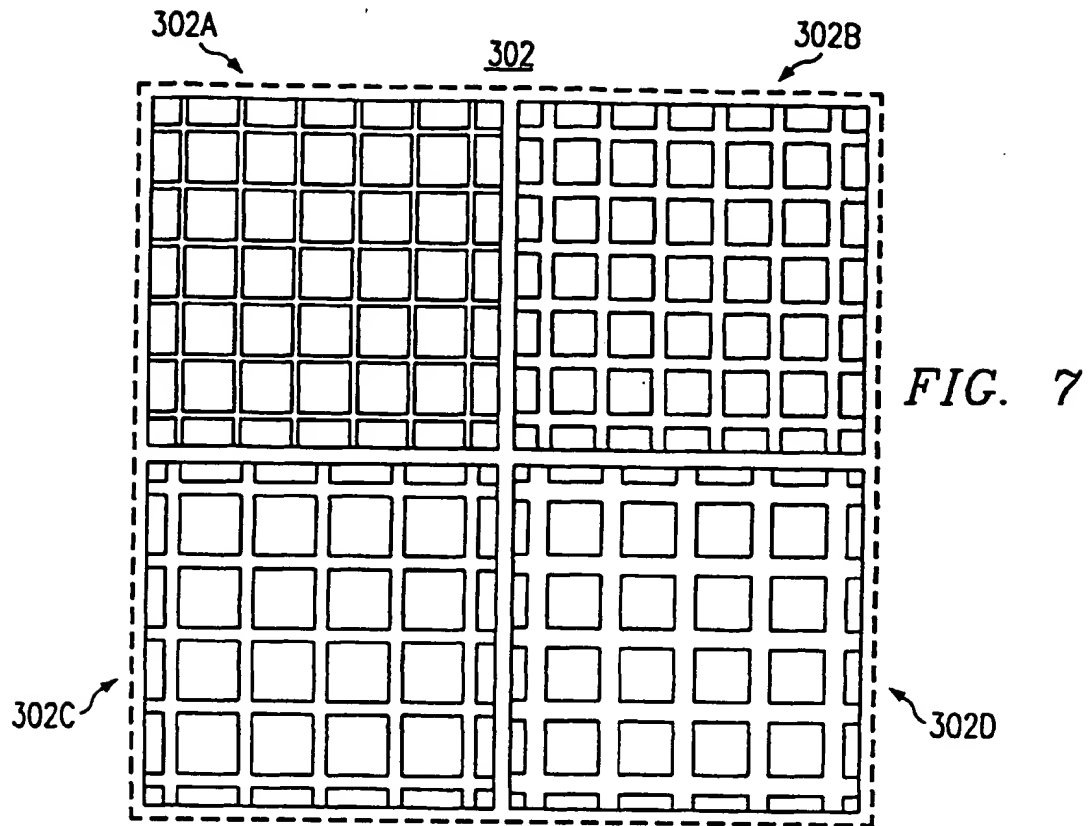


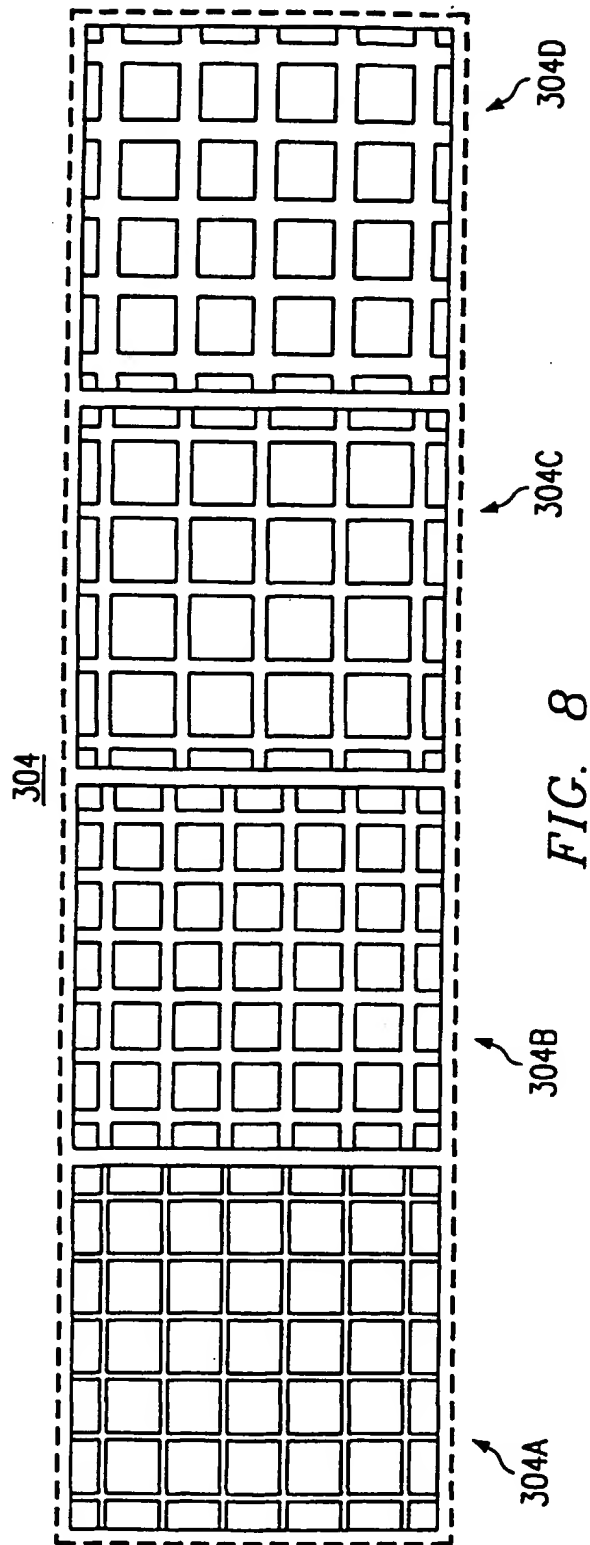
FIG. 3D

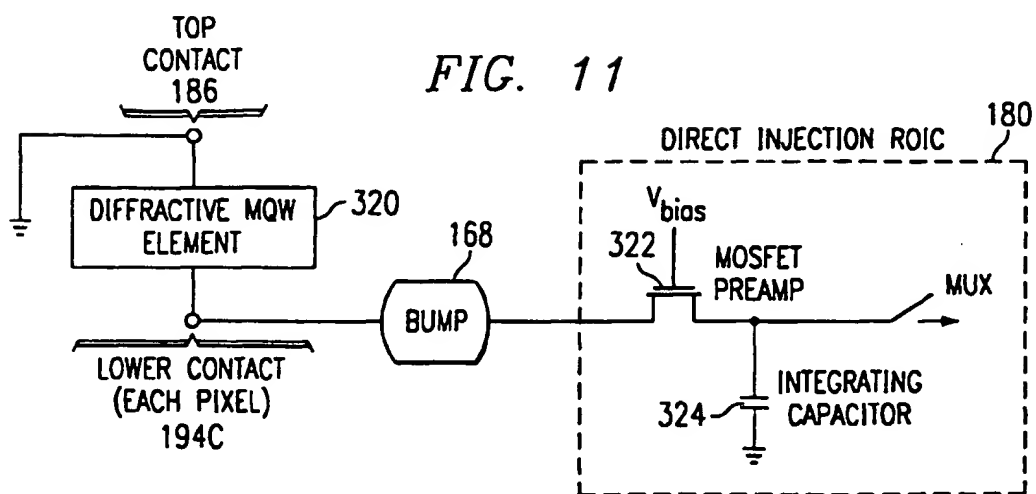
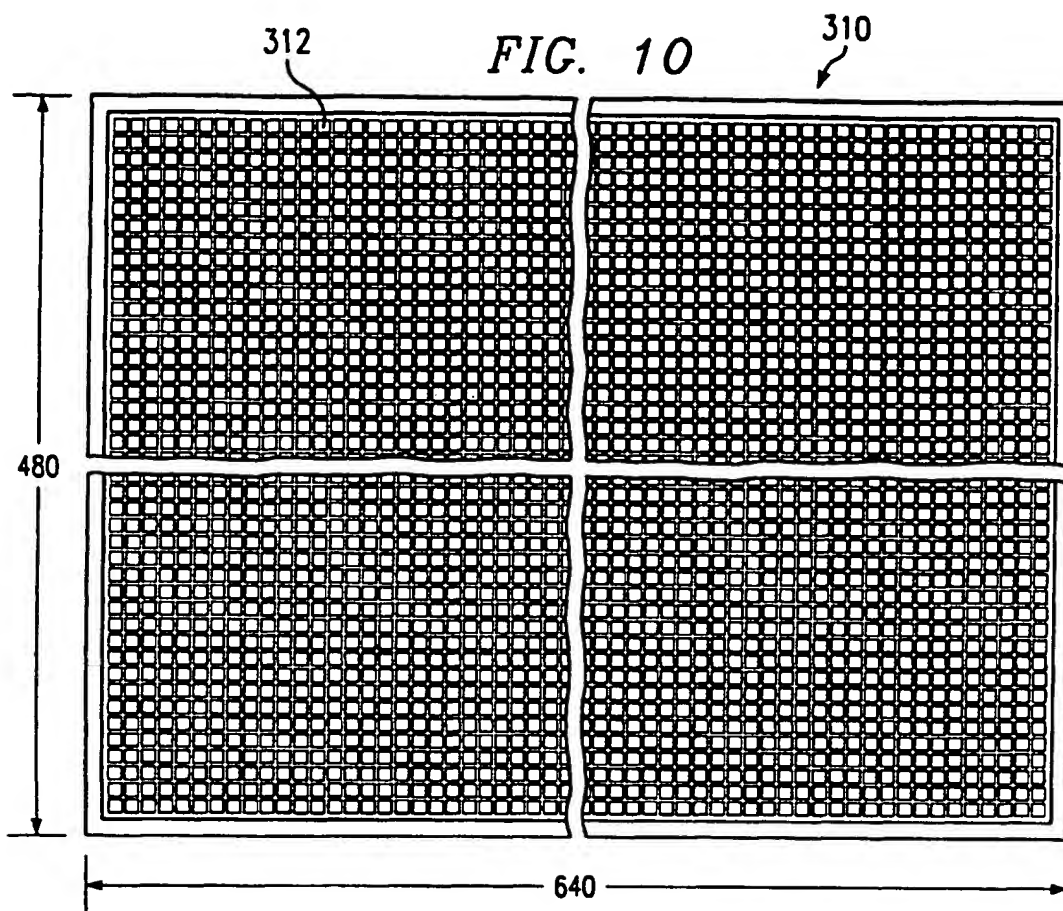












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